

Friends for God Discussion Guide

Discover Your Mission Now

Week 4 E - Eat

Session 4 – E – Eat

Big Idea

We will bless our world by sharing meals with people in need of being reached and restored.

Icebreaker

What is one of your favorite memories of sharing a meal with someone (outside of your own family)?



When we think of how Jesus spent His time doing ministry, we often think of Him preaching to crowds, healing people, and praying. But there was another important aspect to His life that can be easy to overlook. Check it out:

Read Matthew 9:9-13

“9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

1. Why do you think the Pharisees were so offended and upset by the idea of Jesus eating with Matthew and the other tax collectors?
2. What do you think it meant to Matthew that Jesus was willing to come eat with him and his friends?
3. There are so many details the Bible leaves out about Jesus’ life, yet it includes stories of many times that Jesus shared meals with people. Why do you think this was important enough that God wanted it included so clearly and so often in Scripture?
4. Which of these best describes your feelings about sharing meals with people? Why do you think you’re wired like that?
 - a. I prefer to eat alone.
 - b. I don’t mind eating with close friends or family, but I don’t like sharing meals with people beyond that.
 - c. I love eating with anyone I can (co-workers, neighbors, new people), whether I know them well or not.
 - d. Other (please explain)
5. What do you think Jesus meant by “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick”?

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THE BIG IDEA

The challenge to share meals with people is really about the challenge to build a relationship with them. But that can be hard sometimes—it requires intentionality, time, energy, risk, and sacrifice.

6. Why is it so important to build a relationship with people rather than just serve them or tell them about Jesus right away?
7. What is the biggest obstacle to you being able to share meals with the people you want to help find their way back to God?
 - a. I just don't have enough time.
 - b. It's uncomfortable for me.
 - c. I don't want to make them uncomfortable.
 - d. I can't cook and/or don't have the money to eat out.
 - e. I don't even know who I would invite to eat with me.
 - f. Other (please explain)
8. How would you overcome the obstacles people shared for #7? (work together as a group to figure out practical helpful ideas for people)

What's Next

Pick one person/family to invite this week to eat with you (even if you're just getting it on the calendar for the future). It can be a neighbor, co-worker, friend, etc.—if you've been "Beginning with prayer" and "Listening," then hopefully God is making it apparent to you.

Session 4 –Leader's Tips – Answers to earlier questions

1. Back then, if you hung out with people and associated with them, it looked very bad on you. It meant you give permission to their lifestyle and are one of them. An interesting follow-up question: Is the same still true today? Do Christians get judged for who they hang out with?
2. It had to mean a LOT to Matthew—Jesus was proving how much He cared about Matthew. Not only was He willing to eat together, He did it AT Matthew's house and WITH Matthew's friends! It's one thing for us to take the step to eat with people, but how often do we take the step to hang out with THEIR friends, and be the only "new person" in the crowd?
3. We should not under-estimate how important relationship-building was to Jesus' ministry, as illustrated by the fact that there are so many gospel stories of Jesus sharing meals with people. It seems God wanted this to be very clear, yet somehow "evangelism" has often been portrayed to being about yelling at people with bullhorns.
4. This isn't about beating people up, but about understanding what our own personal barriers will be to trying to build relationships, so we can work through those. Maybe point people back to the Ice-Breaker question so they can remember positive experiences they've had sharing meals with others.
5. Jesus could've been inferring that His focus was to be on those far from God and not just on Christians (should that be true of us too?). He wasn't saying the Pharisees were "healthy", but they didn't recognize their sickness, so maybe He was being a bit sarcastic to them in making His point?
6. It is absolutely essential that we build relationships with people first—that's what God called us to. He says to "love your neighbor as yourself," not "convert your neighbor." In fact, HE does the work in people's hearts to draw them to Him—not us. So we are meant to do the

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loving and serving. We cannot see people as projects. Here's a tough question to consider: even if you knew someone would never find God, would you build a relationship with them anyway?

7. This isn't meant to make anyone feel bad, it's just meant to help people do some introspection to discover what their biggest barriers are and where those come from—which can be the first step to overcoming them! (which we'll do in question #8)
8. Work through this together as a group and come up with ideas. Here are a few suggestions for each:
 - a. None of us have enough time—but of course we make time for what's important (if you suddenly took a class or enrolled your kid into sports, you'd make time). So how can we prioritize this in our schedules?
 - b. We just have to push through this and rely on God to work!
 - c. We just have to push through this and rely on God to work!
 - d. There are simple meals (pasta) we can make, and cheap ways to eat out. And remember—it's not about the food!
 - e. Who are the people in your life that you have some relationship with, but are far from God? If there's nobody, then that's a different issue to address—how do we put ourselves back into those circles? And don't forget the "begin with prayer" and "listen" step!